



Photo: Dominique White

Look after **your hearing**

BY TRACY DAWSON, EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION MANAGER, HEARING NELSON

What is your Big Idea?

Hearing loss in our youth is on the rise. We need a community-wide approach to encourage our young people to preserve their hearing through self-regulation. Port Nelson has agreed to sponsor the Hearing Nelson Dangerous Decibel workshops to schools. This means that from September 2020 and throughout 2021, Hearing Nelson can significantly increase the number of young people receiving vital information about why it is so important to preserve their hearing. Many young people do not appreciate that when you lose your hearing it doesn't come back.

The Dangerous Decibel workshop to school children is very interactive and gives students an appreciation of how easy it is to damage the tiny hair cells within the inner ear. They get to understand 'dangerous decibels' and how long they can listen for at different levels. For example, traffic noise can be up to 85 decibels; this means you can listen for eight hours before the hair cells become damaged. The top of an iPhone is 100 decibels; this small increase in decibels has a significant effect on the listening time as every three

decibels it rises, it doubles in its force. You would only get 15 minutes before the hair cells come under strain. A speaker can be 115 decibels and you would only get 15 seconds.

Safe listening guidelines:

- Listen at half volume for no more than 90 minutes (headphones or ear buds)
- Wear ear protection when using power tools
- Walk away from loud sounds
- Invest in a set of washable ear plugs and wear them at noisy events such as speedway, concerts or when partaking in noisy recreational activities
- Enjoy quiet time

How did it eventuate?

Auckland University is running hearing screening tests in pilot schools around the country. The results are indicating that one in three of our youth is showing signs of hearing loss due to unsafe listening habits such as listening to their music too loud for too long!

How does it work?

As Education and Communication

Manager for Hearing Nelson, I facilitate the workshop for students at primary and intermediate schools across the region and assembly talks for college students. The aim of the Dangerous Decibel workshop is to increase the awareness of how easy it is to damage hearing, what are the causes of hearing loss, how to recognise signs of hearing loss and how to prevent hearing loss.

Who does it benefit?

School children from age eight to 18.

How do people become involved?

Hearing Nelson encourages families to talk about hearing-related issues, to encourage screening hearing tests, to monitor the volume and time spent listening to music through headphones and ideally, to buy their children a set of washable ear plugs so that they can get into the habit of self-regulating and wearing the ear plugs at any event that is over 85 decibels. The earplugs typically reduce the decibels by 20dB.

For more information about where to buy ear plugs email Tracy at Hearing Nelson on education@hearingnelson.nz. www.facebook.com/hearingnelsonnz. www.hearingnelson.co.nz

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Above: Tracy Dawson takes a workshop with students at Victory School in Nelson